

Partnership with African countries can solve India's food security needs

The world is vocal in unison today that there is a gradual shift of power from West to East; and India and China are the growth drivers in the eastern region.

While energy security is most widely discussed today, with this tectonic shift of power, the debate of food security is gaining grounds slowly and progressively. Asia is the home to the majority of world population. Most of its nations have young population with economies in single digit or early double digits growth rates. With population getting affluent, there is a spontaneous up-gradation into complete two meals – there on from coarse to fine grain. This brings about the continuous need for higher food grain productions and productivity. With a growing economy led by the services sector and industrialization also gathering momentum, the agricultural land bank is shrinking.

Especially in India, since there is no scope of expansion of agricultural land, the time is ripe to discuss and implement different models and processes to ensure food security in time to come.

One possible solution for India's food security in future could be partnership with the African countries where there is huge agricultural land bank which has not been cultivated yet. Moreover, Africa is strategically located to be relied upon.

Africa, as a continent, is geographically best suited for India to engage in terms of our food security. According to Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of United Nations, Africa is estimated to have in excess of 800 million hectares of cultivatable land. Only 197 million hectares are being farmed.

Moreover, the cultivatable land has access to freshwater and seaport which are the basic ingredients for a successful farming



and to carry out the processing operations.

Besides, this is an immensely beneficial proposition for African countries as well. Food crisis is already a huge problem to tackle with in the African countries.

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less than 2980) people in Africa and the number is increasing. India's alliance with Africa will be a win-win situation for both the nations since it will not only create employment opportunities in Africa but also will build a sound foundation for food security. However, here we have to design a model which economi-

cally as well as politically viable.

The idea is that the food companies can engage the African nations backed by the government of India and create a three-way joint venture. This three-way joint venture will create a win-win situation for both India and Africa.

In this JV the African countries can contribute by leasing their land for Farming (The government of India is working with African nation to fix the lease period for 99 years).

Secondly, the government of India through its PSUs would engage in a token equity in the project enabling the project to get the backing of the government. Finally, the individual companies can bring the fallow land to production and process the crops.

To understand the benefit of this co-operation, let's look at the implementation process. Local population of Africa is not skilled to do farming. Hence, Gov-

ernment of India will ensure that labourers and farmers from India can work in these projects.

This will open new employment avenues for India labourers and farmers. The expertise of production and funding will be taken care of by the individual companies.

The production plan is rather straightforward. Primary crops to be produced will be rice and pulses. Rice can be opted for partial sharing in real terms with the host country and pulses can 100% exported to India. Both these crops are essential to India. Rice is a staple both in India and Africa. Thus the project will ensure food security both for the host country and India in the long run. Needless to say, both India and the host nation would have to sign off on this vision and its careful and detailed implementation will be curved through the individual companies.